Research Documentation: Locating Fairbury's Lost Chicago & Paducah Railroad to Strawn
Dale C. Maley — August 2026

This research file documents the process used to determine the probable route of the former Chicago & Paducah Railroad from Fairbury to Strawn, Illinois. The line existed for only a few years and was removed in 1881. No known physical traces of the Fairbury-to-Strawn extension remain.

The reconstruction uses an 1876 Livingston County map, township section boundaries, modern mapping, historic newspaper accounts, and the known location of Fairbury's East Shaft coal mine. Two points where the railroad crossed Section 11 were transferred from the historic map to a modern map. Extending the resulting line northwest placed its junction with the Fairbury railroad corridor near the former East Shaft coal mine, commonly known as Shaft Hill.

The location of Shaft Hill was not used to establish the reconstructed railroad angle. Its proximity to the independently reconstructed line provides additional corroborating evidence.

The resulting route should be considered an **approximate reconstruction based upon the best evidence currently available**, rather than a surveyed location of the original railroad.

Recently, several people have mentioned to me they would really like to know at exactly what point the RR left fairbury heading to strawn.

What have I written before?

Title: The Chicago & Paducah Railroad

By: Dale C. Maley

Livingston County was created in 1837. It was one of the last parts of Illinois to be settled and farmed because it was swampland, and there were no railroads to import needed supplies or export farm products.

These two problems were solved by railroads built in the 1850s and drainage of the swampland by orange clay field tile in the 1880s. Fortunately, the 1878 Livingston County history book by LeBaron recounts the construction and routes of the first railroads built in Livingston County.

The first railroad in Livingston County was the Chicago & Mississippi Railroad, running from Joliet to Alton. It was built in 1853 and 1854. A few years later, it was purchased by T. B. Blackstone and renamed the Chicago & Alton Railroad. Initially, the stations on the main line were Dwight, Odell, Cayuga, Pontiac, and Ocoya.

In 1857, the Peoria & Oquawka Railroad laid its tracks from Peoria to the Indiana border. The villages of Fairbury and Chatsworth were created on the new railroad. This railroad was later renamed the TP&W (Toledo, Peoria, and Warsaw Railroad).

In 1865, Mr. Samuel L. Fleming of Pontiac, an investor in early railroads, got the Illinois legislature to approve a charter for a new railroad from Ottawa to Fairbury. Initially, it was named the Fairbury, Pontiac & Northwestern Railroad. This name was later changed to the Chicago & Paducah Railroad. Eventually, the name was again changed to the Wabash Railroad.

The charter investors were S. C. Ladd, B. P. Babcock, Samuel L. Fleming, Nelson Buck, Jonathan Duff, William Strawn, R. B. Harrington, S. C. Crane, John Dehner, Walter Cornell, M. E. Collins, Ralph Plumb, Enoch Lundy, David McIntosh, H. L. Marsh, W. G. McDowell, J. W. Strevell, I. B. Tyler, and William B. Lyon.

These charter investors were businessmen and lawyers of that era. Ladd Street in Pontiac is named after S. C. Ladd. Nelson Buck was a surveyor who was murdered in Nebraska by the Sioux in 1869, along with several young men from Pontiac. John Dehner's brick house still stands in Pontiac and is now called the Jones House. Henry Marsh discovered coal in Fairbury, and Marsh Park is named after him. Judge W. G. McDowell's house still stands in Fairbury, and he founded McDowell, Illinois, and Fairbury, Nebraska. Abraham Lincoln spent an afternoon and evening at the home of J. W. Strevell, and this house is now called the Strevell House in Pontiac.

In 1867, the charter for this new railroad was amended so it might run anywhere northerly and southerly of Pontiac, that point being retained. A company was formed in 1869 with M. E. Collins as President and S. S. Lawrence as Secretary.

Bonds were issued by the Livingston County townships of Indian Grove, Avoca, Eppard's Point, Owego, Pontiac, Amity, and Newton to pay for the railroad construction. The Fairbury, Pontiac & Northwestern Company contracted with Colonel Ralph Plumb of Streator, Colonel W. H. W. Cushman of Ottawa, and David Strawn to build and equip the new railroad.

All the bonds were transferred, and stock was also issued to them, so the railroad became theirs after construction. The contract to build the railroad stipulated that the new railroad would never be transferred to the Chicago & Alton Railroad, with the intent of the new railroad always competing with the existing Chicago & Alton.

In 1872, the new Chicago & Paducah Railroad started track construction in Streator and ran southeast through Livingston County. It then ran through Ford, Champaign, Piatt, Moultrie, Shelby, and Effingham Counties to Altamont. The stations in Livingston County included Newtown, Cornell, Rowe, Pontiac, McDowell, Lodemia, Fairbury, Murphy's Station, and Strawn.

At Streator, the Chicago & Paducah connected with the Ottawa branch of the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad. It initially had 41 miles of track in Livingston County.

A few years after the Chicago & Paducah Railroad was built through Livingston County, the track connecting Fairbury to Strawn was removed. The Fairbury to Strawn line was no longer needed because other railroads ran south of Forrest. The track at Fairbury was connected to the TP&W line. The point where the Chicago & Paducah Railroad turned south from Fairbury towards Strawn remains a historical mystery. After 150 years, no traces of this Fairbury to Strawn branch can be found.

The Chicago & Paducah Railroad started in Streator and ran south into Pontiac. The 1923 Sanborn Insurance map of Pontiac shows the Chicago & Paducah (renamed to the Wabash on the map) railroad coming from the north into Pontiac around the intersection of Aurora and Indiana Streets. It went southerly through Pontiac and left Pontiac on a bridge (which no longer exists) across the Vermilion River just east of what is now Chautauqua Park. One photo does exist showing the bridge over the Vermilion River by Chautauqua Park.

This railroad then proceeded in a southeastern direction to McDowell, Lodemia, Champlin, and the northwest corner of Fairbury. The Chicago & Paducah came into Fairbury on the northwest side of town, crossed the TP&W tracks, and then ran parallel to the TP&W. There was a depot on the west side of Fairbury. Only one poor-quality photo still exists that shows this long-gone depot.

After the Chicago & Paducah came into Fairbury, the tracks ran parallel and just south of the TP&W tracks. What is now Walnut Street was called Paducah Avenue long ago.

In the 1970s, the tracks from Pontiac to Fairbury were in poor condition, and the trains had to travel at slow speeds. This railroad ran until the late 1970s when the tracks were removed from Pontiac to Fairbury. The outline of this track can be seen where it intersected roads going in an east-west direction.

The Chicago & Paducah Railroad, later renamed the Wabash, operated in Livingston County for approximately 100 years. It allowed farmers between Pontiac and Fairbury to export their grain products to many different markets in the United States.

Anything else I have written?

Fairbury's Lost Railroad

By: Dale C. Maley
For: Fairbury Blade Newspaper
Date: March 13, 2020

In the early 1800s, it was commonly accepted that farmland had no value unless it had trees and was located near a river. This early belief is why Southern Illinois was the first part of the state to be settled. Early pioneer farmers did not want to come to the Fairbury area because it was swampy prairie and only had the Vermilion River running through it. Livingston County and Fairbury were the last areas in the State of Illinois to be settled.

Because there were no farmers in Central Illinois, there was no need for a railroad. There was a surge of pioneer farmers in the 1850s in the Fairbury area. Congress passed a new law granting land rights to Veterans of the War of 1812. Most of these veterans did not want to move to swampy Fairbury, so they sold their land rights to pioneer farmers. Many early Fairbury farmers bought their land from the government using either low cost land grants or they paid $2.50 cash per acre.

In 1857, the Peoria & Oquawka Railroad decided there were enough farmers in Central Illinois to justify extending their line from Peoria east to the Indiana border. Fairbury was founded in 1857 when the new railroad line came through this area.

Several different people decided around 1869 there should be a new railroad from Streator to Paducah, Kentucky. David Strawn, who owned a lot of farm land around now what is Strawn, Illinois, was one of the promoters of this new railroad.

The investors initially were going to install new tracks from Streator to Strawn. Intermediate stops would be at Pontiac and Forrest. The citizens of Forrest voted not to pay any interest on the new bonds issued until the new line was completed. This was unsatisfactory to the railroad company, so they decided to run the line through Fairbury instead of Forrest.

The businessmen of Fairbury were keenly aware of how much extra business additional railroad lines could bring. At that time, there was a feud between the West and East End business groups, with John Marsh leading the west side group. Marsh persuaded the

Chicago & Paducah railroad to bring the line from Pontiac into his west side of Fairbury. The East End members were not happy about this decision.

The new railroad tracks were run from Pontiac to Fairbury in 1872. Stops along this portion of the line were Pontiac, McDowell, Lodemia, and Fairbury. The new tracks entered Fairbury on the west side, where the Honegger's feed mill was located. In Fairbury, the new tracks then ran east parallel with the TP&W tracks. Walnut Street was renamed Paducah Avenue. At some point, the new line turned south and went on to Strawn.

Just eight years after the new railroad was completed, the Chicago & Paducah Railroad faced foreclosure. In 1880 it was sold to the Wabash, St. Louis, and Pacific Railway. This company changed its name to the Wabash Railroad in 1887.

Somewhere around 1884, the portion of the track from Fairbury south to Strawn was removed. It was not really needed because other railroad lines ran in a north-south direction through Forrest. The line from Streator to Fairbury continued to operate until 1979, when the Streator branch was closed.

The Chicago & Paducah Railroad initially offered both freight cars and passenger cars from Fairbury to Pontiac. Grain harvested in this area was loaded onto this line at McDowell, Lodemia, and Fairbury. The grain elevator at McDowell added a hardware store and lumberyard to serve area farmers. Farmers could order lumber, which would be delivered by train to McDowell.

Dorothy Bodley-Tollensdorf was born in Lodemia in 1904. In 1909, when she was five years old, she walked a quarter-mile from her house to the Lodemia grain elevator. Every day she boarded a passenger car on the Wabash and rode it to St. Mary's school in Pontiac. Every night, the five year old returned home on the train. She also attended Pontiac High School using the train. Dorothy married Bernard Tollensdorf. Many current Fairbury residents fondly remember Dorothy working in the Fairbury Paint Store, just east of Bluestem Bank on Locust Street.

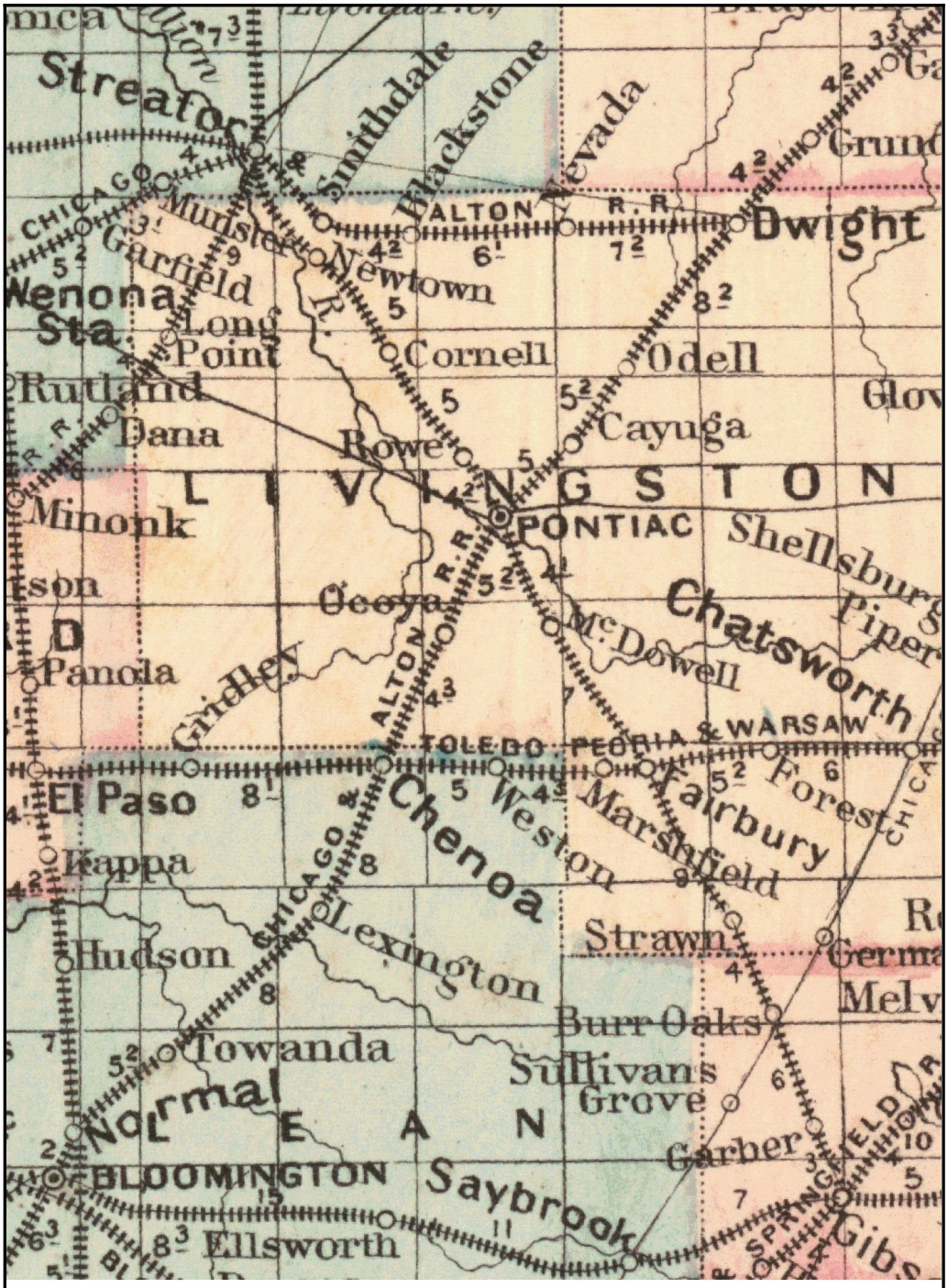
In the 1960s, farm children who lived along this railroad fondly remember picking and eating the little sweet wild strawberries that sprung up along the tracks. The children would also place pennies on the rails, so the train could run over and flatten them. The tracks were not in great condition, so the old freight train would travel fairly slowly between Lodemia and Fairbury.

After the Wabash closed this line, the rails and ties were removed. Evidence of where this line ran is still apparent where the tracks crossed the blacktop roads. Aerial views of the farmland also indicate where this portion of the line was located.

Several old maps still exist which show the branch of the Chicago & Paducah running from Fairbury to Strawn. Unfortunately, these old maps are not specific in showing the location of exactly where the tracks turned south towards Strawn. The earliest memories of older local farmers dates back to the 1940s. If the tracks were removed in 1884, by 1940 they would have been gone for 56 years. Six decades of farming where the tracks were removed has wiped out any physical evidence of the exactly track location.

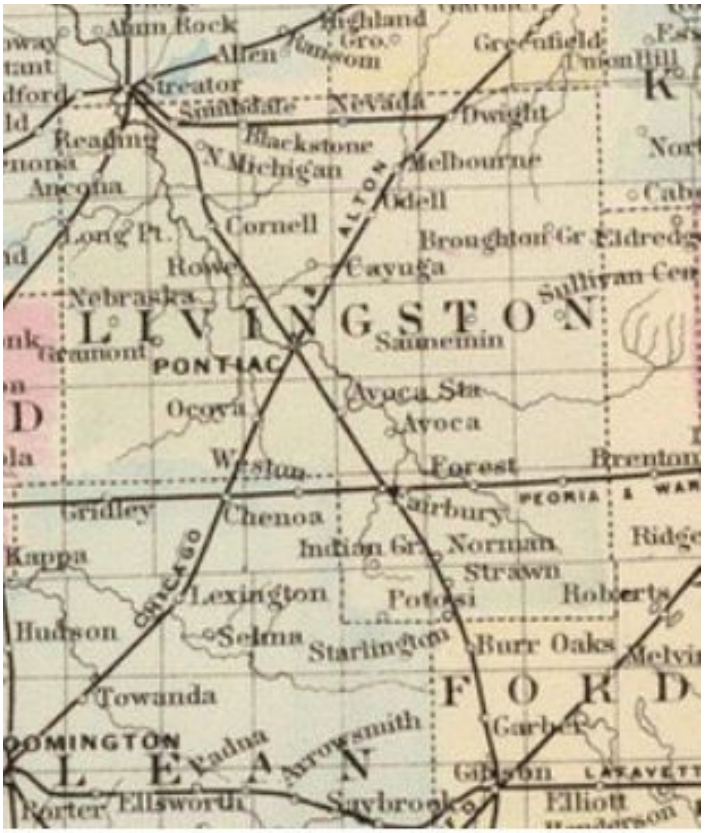
Back in 1884, there were only dirt roads in the farm areas. Therefore, there is no evidence left where the old Fairbury to Strawn line crossed the dirt roads 136 years ago. The location of the Fairbury to Pontiac portion of the tracks will remain apparent for decades to come because of the remnants of the track crossings on the black top roads.

The exact location of where the railroad tracks turned south from Fairbury to Strawn remains a mystery. Maybe someday additional evidence will be uncovered which better defines the exact location of this "lost" railroad line.



1875 Railroad map showing Chicago & Paducah Line from Streator to Strawn

Other maps?



1880 railroad map of Illinois showing the Chicago & Paducah Railroad running south from Streator to Pontiac, Fairbury, and Gibson City.

1976 Pontiac Leader Article

Strawn platted in 1873

The village of Strawn was platted on June 6, 1873 on land owned by David Strawn of Ottawa. Strawn was a director in the construction of the Fairbury, Pontiac and Northwestern Railroad, later the Wabash, from Streator to Strawn. The original plat contained 30 acres in section three, Fayette Township.

To encourage permanent settlement in the village, David Strawn offered an alternate lot to every person who built a building meeting certain specifications, especially of size. That meant no shanties. That offer lasted only until Sept. 1, 1873.

E. H. Roberts selected the first lot on the day the village was laid out. He built the first store, which sold hardware. The construction of the stores of H. McCormick, T. H. Aaron and Brownlee Brothers soon followed.

The first dwelling in the community was built by John Colfer and later operated as a hotel by H. McCormick.

Fayette Township, where Strawn is located, was the last township to be set off by act of the Board of Supervisors in 1871. Philander Morgan laid out all the roads in the township and named it after the county in Pennsylvania, where his father was born.

According to official U. S. Census figures, the population of the village of Strawn and Fayette Township peaked in the late 1870's. The population of Strawn recorded in 1880 was 331 and in the township, 712.

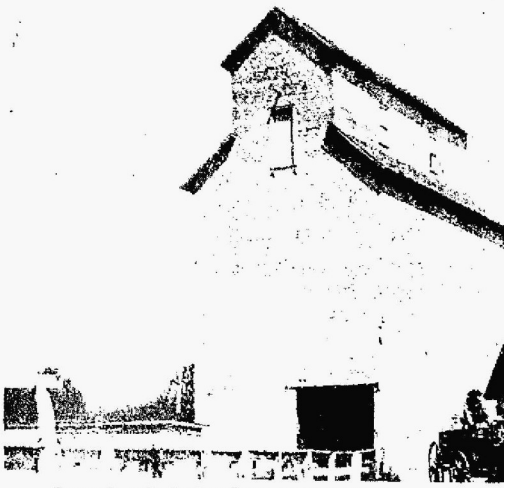
Except for a short lived increase around 1910, the population of the area has gradually decreased to 144 residents of Strawn and a total population of 388 in Fayette Township recorded in 1970. Most of the decrease is a result of better farming, technology, which enables individual farmers to farm more land effectively.

Another factor inhibiting growth, early in Strawn's history, was the completion of the Illinois Central railroad about a mile north of Strawn. The Illinois Central attracted much business away from the Wabash Railroad and eventually resulted in the Wabash taking up the tracks of the Strawn - Fairbury spur and rerouting through Forrest.

The first school was taught in Strawn in 1874. The first school building was constructed in 1877 at the corner of Walter and Third Streets. A second story was added to the building in 1895. The building was razed in 1925.

The brick school building at the edge of town was built in 1923.

At one time the town was quite a trading center, boasting five general merchan stores, which sold everyt from groceries to drugs farm implements to dry go two attorneys, blacksm wagonmaker, one dealer grain, lumber and coal,

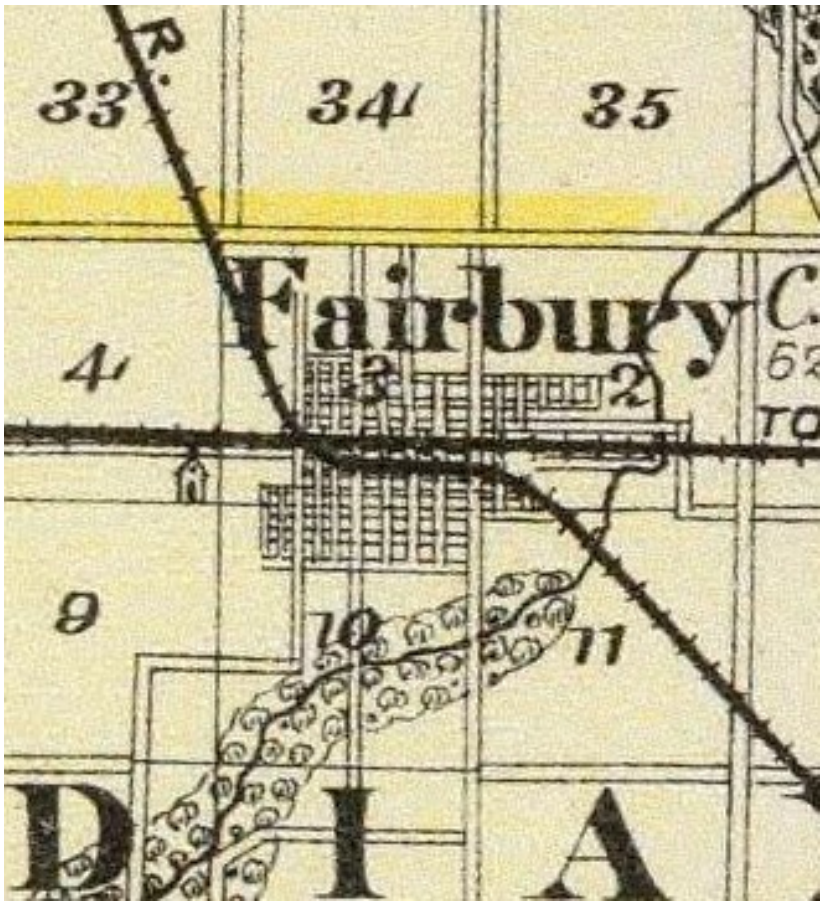


Several grain dealers have operated in Strawn since the Fairbury, Pontiac and Northwestern Railroad, which later grain shipments out of Strawn in 1897 amounted to 200,000 bu oats. This photograph is of the old Strawn Farmer's Elevato

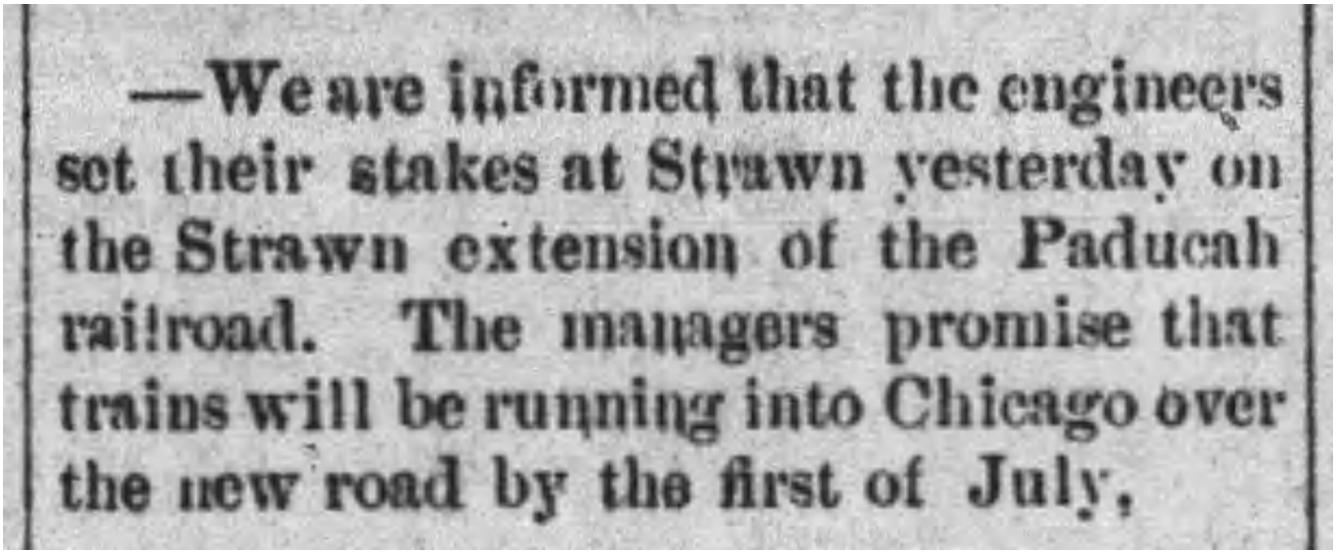
This old photo of James Hayes, railroad agent, was take in the old depot office at Strawn. Notice the lanterns at righ probably used to signal the trains. At the left of the photo

from above article….Another factor inhibiting growth, early in Strawn's history, was the completion of the Illinois Central railroad about a mile north of Strawn. The Illinois Central attracted much business away from the Wabash Railroad and eventually resulted in the Wabash taking up the tracks on the Strawn – Fairbury spur and rerouting through Forrest.

1876 Map of Livingston County



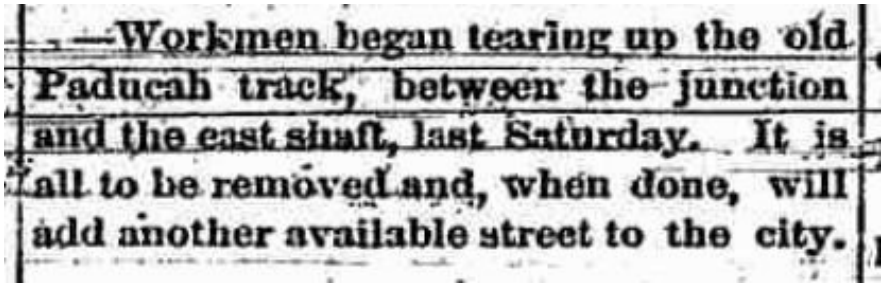
strawn extension of chicago & paducah railroad to strawn being built--Gibson_City_Courier_Fri__Dec_6__1878_



—We are informed that the engineers set their stakes at Strawn yesterday on the Strawn extension of the Paducah railroad. The managers promise that trains will be running into Chicago over the new road by the first of July.

The Chicago & Paducah tracks were laid to Fairbury in 1872, apparently the line was not extended south to Strawn until 1878??

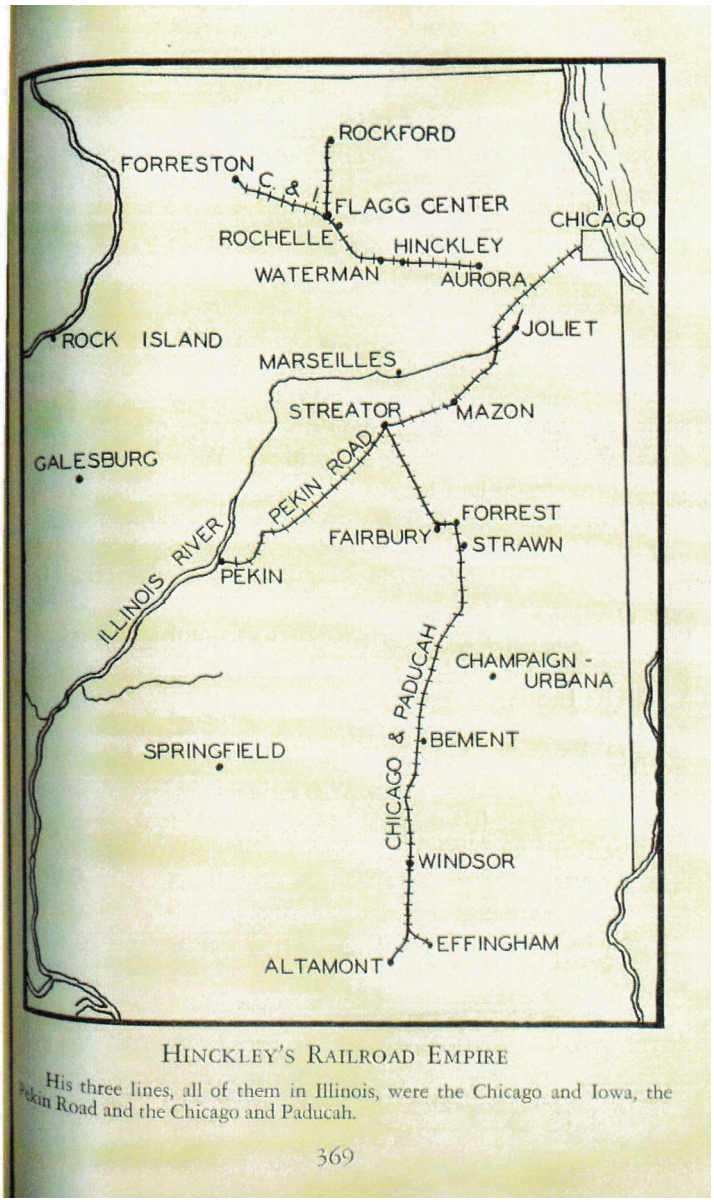
paducah tracks going south from fairbury torn out in blade 12-31-1881



—Workmen began tearing up the old Paducah track, between the junction and the east shaft, last Saturday. It is all to be removed and, when done, will add another available street to the city.

So, it ran from McDowell south to Fairbuy on the west side of fairbury where it crossed the TP&W, then it ran parallel to the TP&W about a ½ block south of the TP&W, then it ran east to the coal mine at 10th street, then it ran east and at some point turned south to strawn.

Hinckley's Railroad Empire - Chicago & Paducah railroad (6)



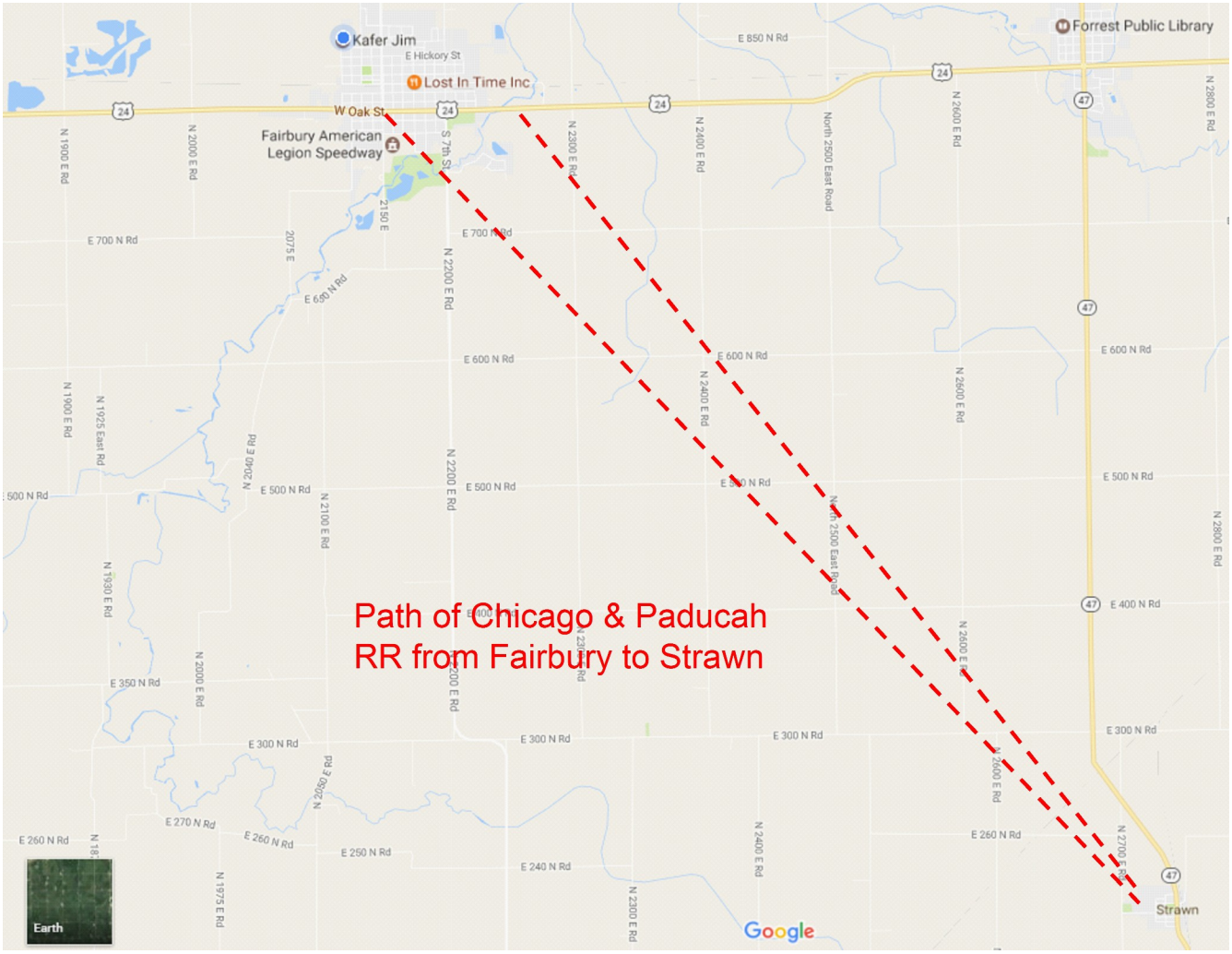
HINCKLEY'S RAILROAD EMPIRE

His three lines, all of them in Illinois, were the Chicago and Iowa, the Pekin Road and the Chicago and Paducah.

369

I believe this map shows the Chicago & Paducah after the line from fairbury to strawn was re-routed to Forrest and then south to Strawn.

Map drawn by DC Maley some time ago with likely path of fairbury to strawn line

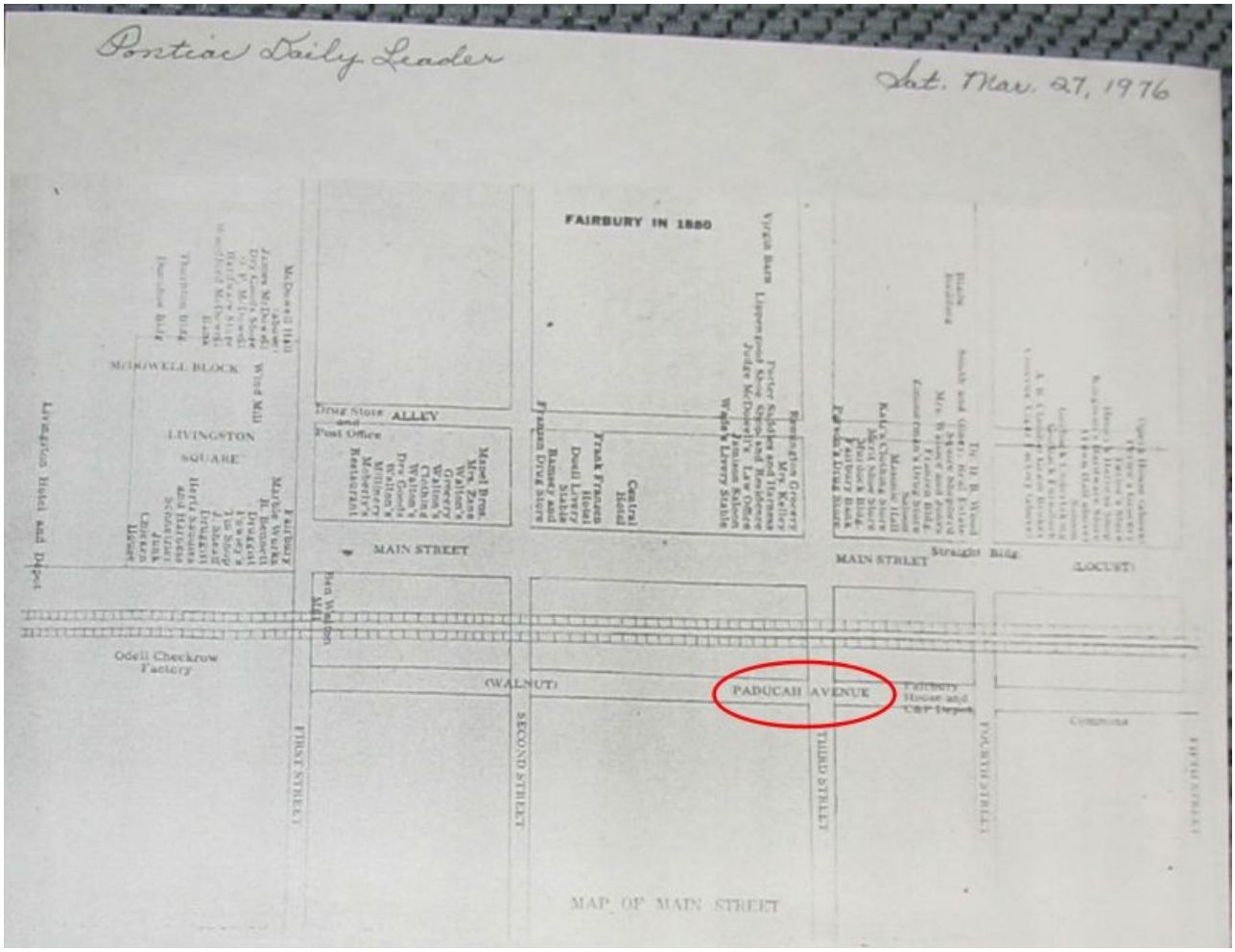


1895 map shows Chicago & Paducah RR gone by then

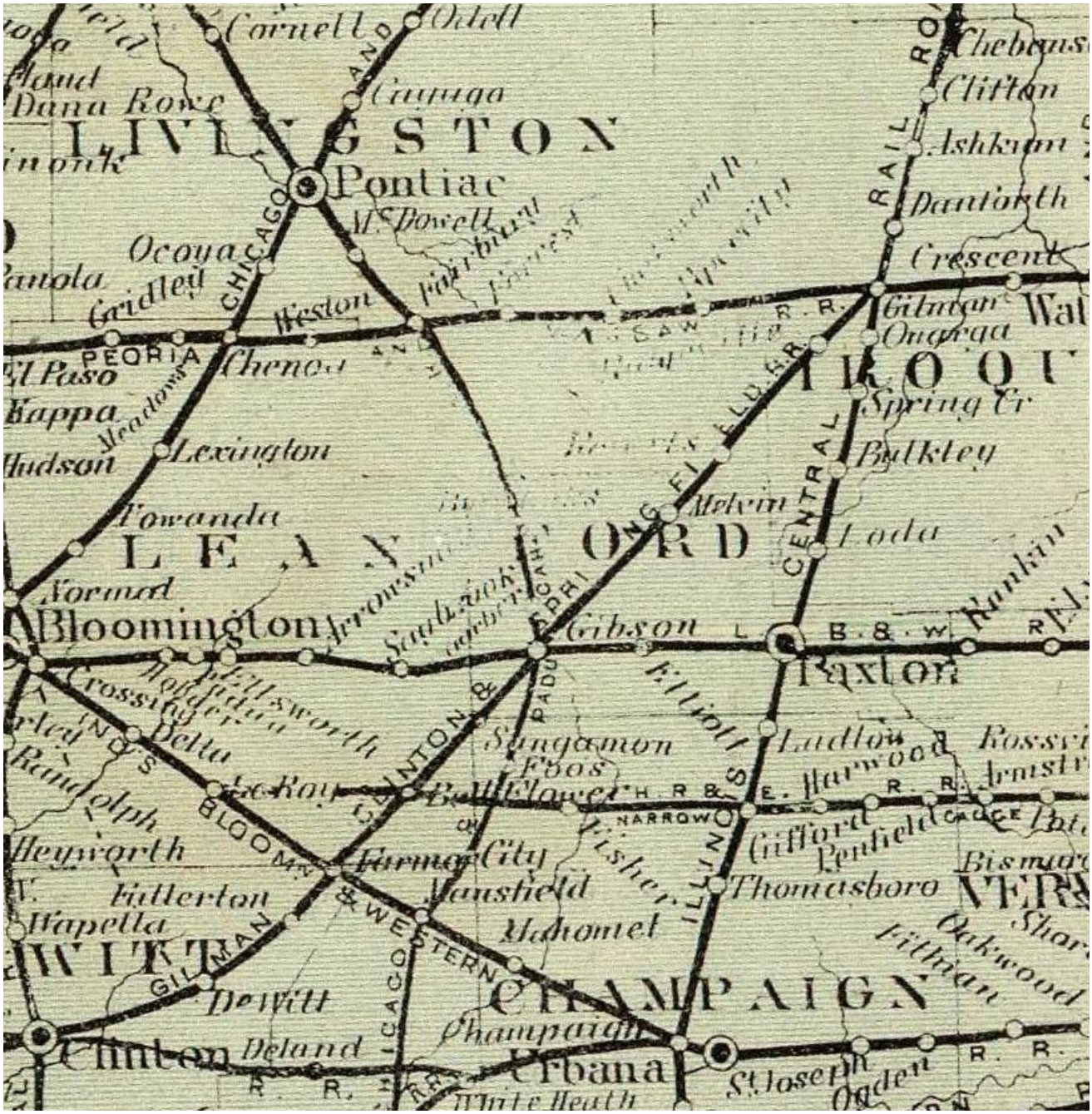
Description

Title	1895, The Railway Age and Northwestern Railroader. Map of the Chicago, Paducah, and Memphis Railway.
Subject	Maps--1880-1890. Railroads.
Keywords	maps railroads Chicago, Paducah, and Memphis Railway Illinois Decatur (Il.) St. Louis (Mo.) Chicago (Il.)

Paducah Avenue (now Walnut Street) shown on map in 1976 Pontiac Leader

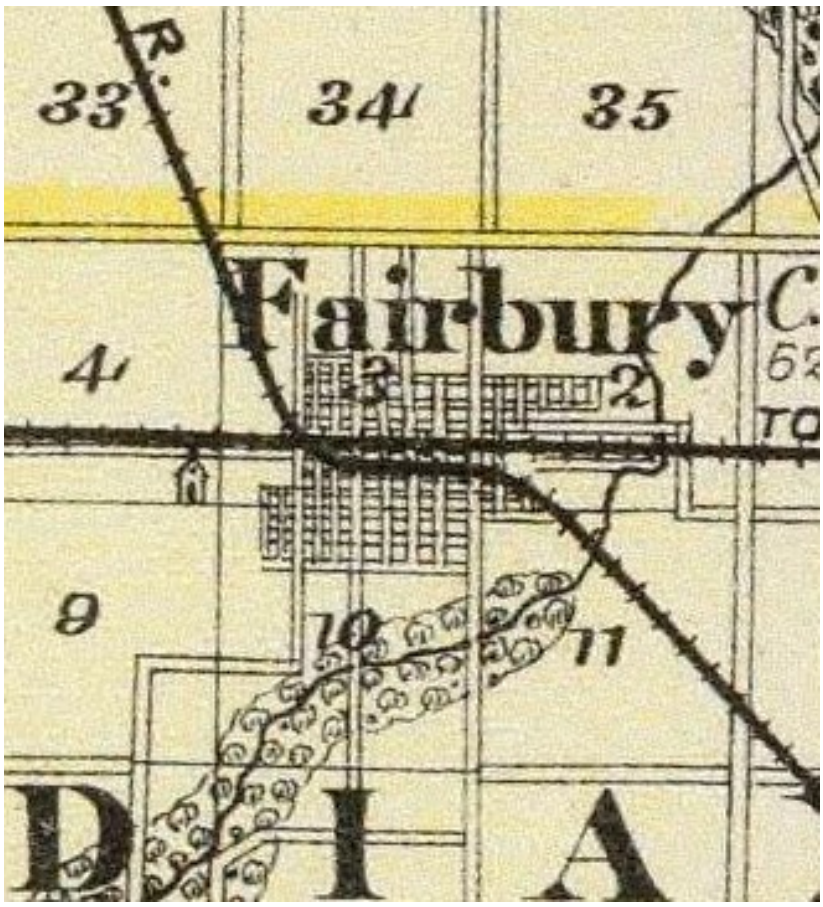


1159003--1876 Illinois Railroad Map--showing Paducah RR going south from fairbury to gibson city



Summary so Far

- Chicago & Paducah was run from Pontiac – McDowell – to Fairbury in 1872
- Extension from Fairbury to Strawn not installed until 12/6/1878
- Extension removed from Fairbury to Strawn in December 1881
- Was only in service for 3 years
- Best map showing exact point where it turned south is 1876 map of Livingston County



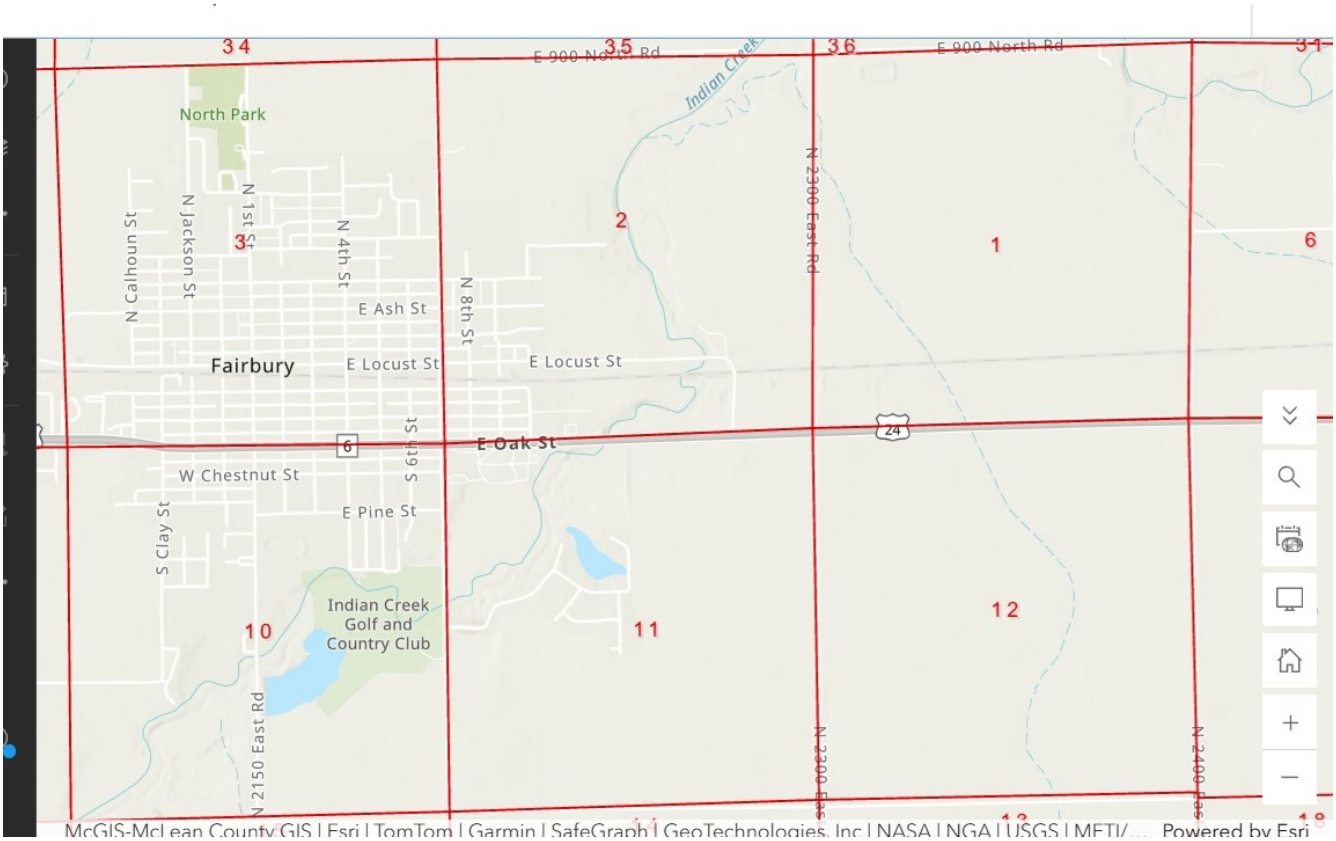
Chatgpt

[Link to GIS map that shows sections.]

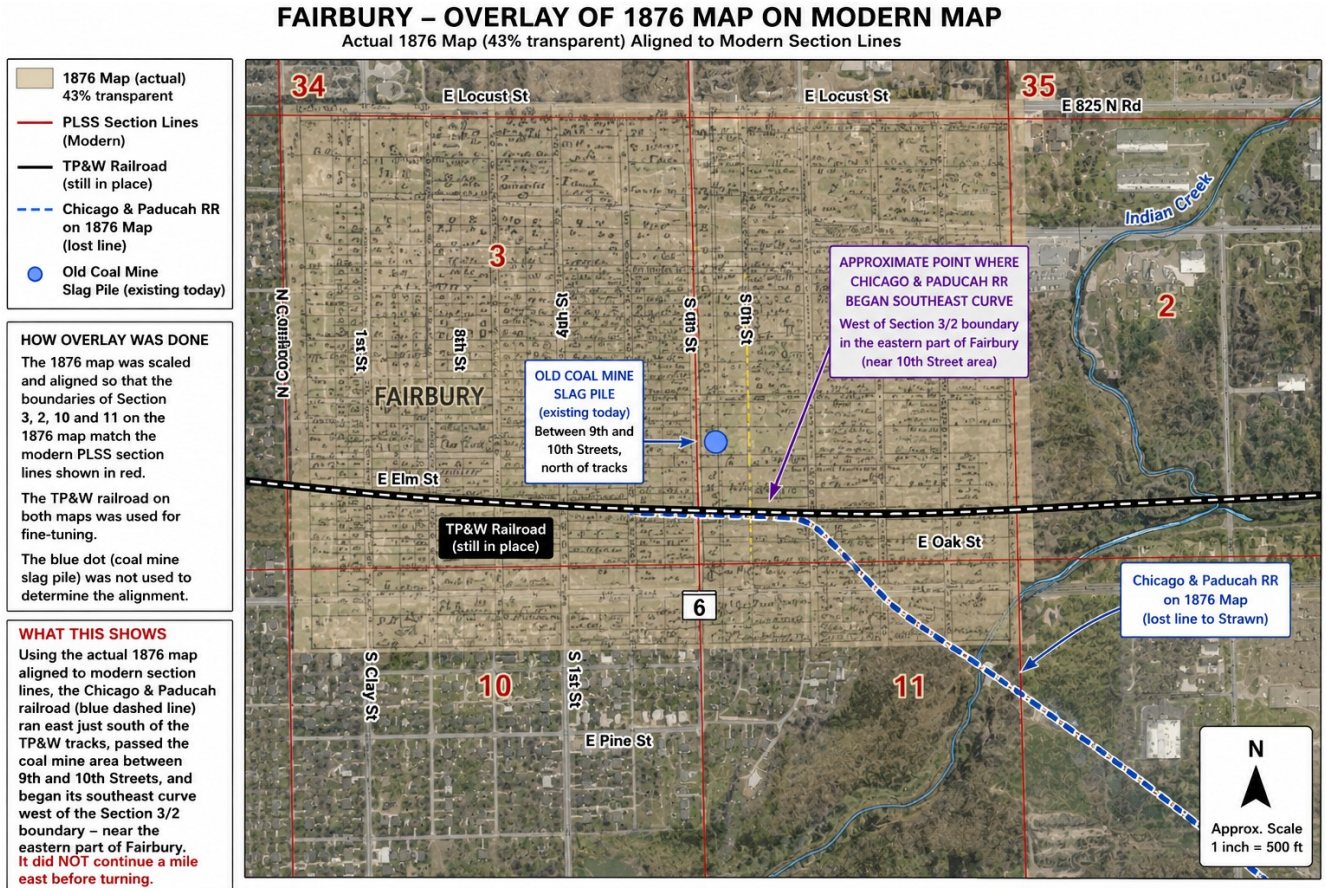
I had very long conversation with Chatgpt, which I won't paste here, but long story short, it used the GIS map of fairbury that shows the township section lines, then used the 1876 map showing the railroad line from fairbury to strawn, to create a new map showing where the line went south from fairbury.

I inputted the location of Shaft Hill from that old coal mine:

I also took a screen shop of the GIS map of fairbury showing the sections:



Here is the map that Chatgpt came up with:


FAIRBURY – OVERLAY OF 1876 MAP ON MODERN MAP
Actual 1876 Map (43% transparent) Aligned to Modern Section Lines
1876 Map (actual) 43% transparent
PLSS Section Lines (Modern)
TP&W Railroad (still in place)
Chicago & Paducah RR on 1876 Map (lost line)
Old Coal Mine Slag Pile (existing today)
HOW OVERLAY WAS DONE
The 1876 map was scaled and aligned so that the boundaries of Section 3, 2, 10 and 11 on the 1876 map match the modern PLSS section lines shown in red.
The TP&W railroad on both maps was used for fine-tuning.
The blue dot (coal mine slag pile) was not used to determine the alignment.
WHAT THIS SHOWS
Using the actual 1876 map aligned to modern section lines, the Chicago & Paducah railroad (blue dashed line) ran east just south of the TP&W tracks, passed the coal mine area between 9th and 10th Streets, and began its southeast curve west of the Section 3/2 boundary – near the eastern part of Fairbury.
It did NOT continue a mile east before turning.
34
E Locust St
E Locust St
35
E 825 N Rd
Indian Creek
3
2
N Cooper St
1st St
8th St
S 4th St
S 9th St
S 10th St
APPROXIMATE POINT WHERE CHICAGO & PADUCAH RR BEGAN SOUTHEAST CURVE
West of Section 3/2 boundary in the eastern part of Fairbury (near 10th Street area)
FAIRBURY
OLD COAL MINE SLAG PILE (existing today)
Between 9th and 10th Streets, north of tracks
E Elm St
TP&W Railroad (still in place)
E Oak St
Chicago & Paducah RR on 1876 Map (lost line to Strawn)
6
S Clay St
10
S 1st St
E Pine St
11
N
Approx. Scale 1 inch = 500 ft

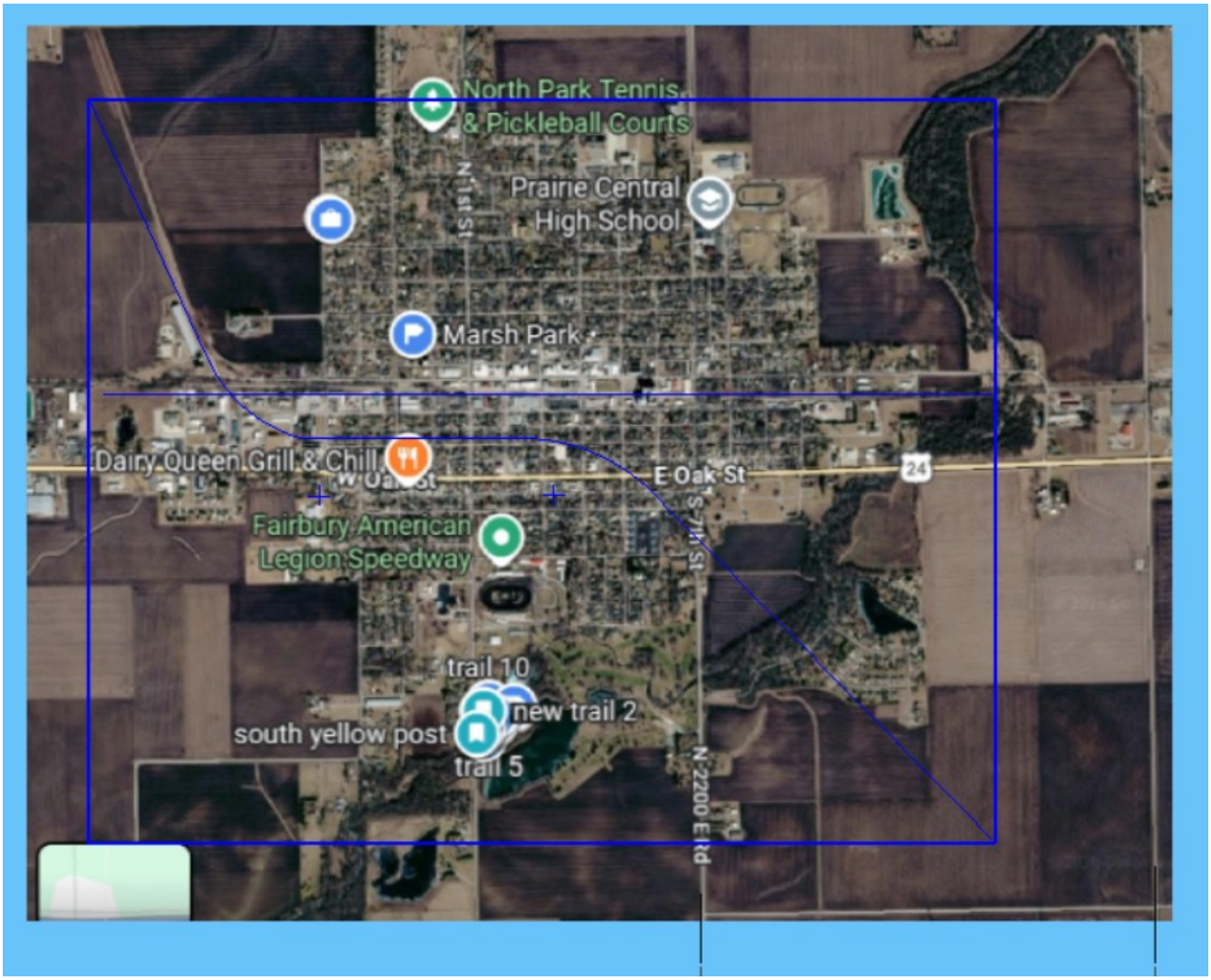
My brain can not related to this map in terms of current landmarks like 7th street going south, the golf course, and indian creek. To make my own map I need:

-1876 map
-modern google map of fairbury
-GIS map to add the section lines

Process for Dale C. Maley to Make the Map on August 13, 2026

1. Import the 3 key maps into Sketchup
    1. 1876 Map
    2. GIS map of Fairbury
    3. Modern Google map
    4. Change 1876 map so it only shows the 4 key sections which are 2,3, 10, and 11
        1. Did that so I can overlay them on the 4 key sections onto the GIS map of fairbury that has township sections
    5. Overlay 1876 map on top of GIS map
    6. manually draw horizontal line for TP&W, then draw the Chicago & Paducah RR
    7. Need way to locate hand drawn Paducah RR onto a modern Google map
        1. Measure horizontal length of bottom of sections 11 on the GIS map
        2. Scale the modern google map to match that length

That did not work !!!!!!!!!!!!



I think the problem might be that the 1876 map maker has east-west route of Paducah RR wrong because you can not show 2 separate RR lines if they are only a ½ block apart like they were.

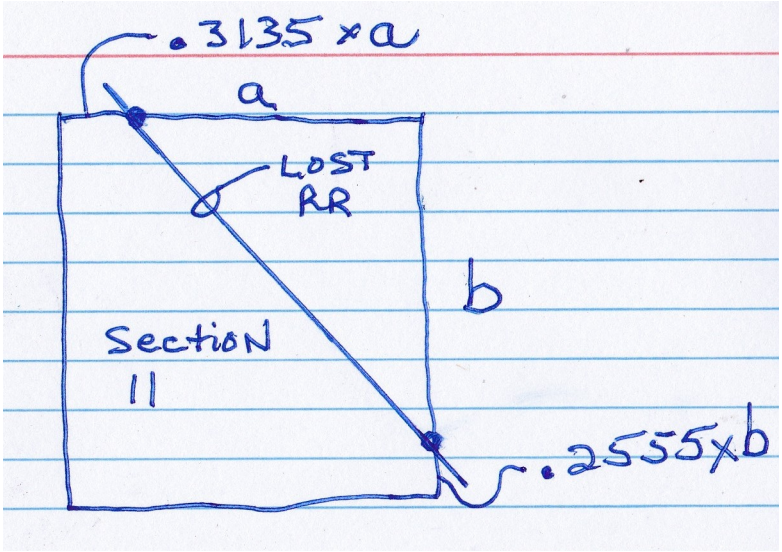
Another Approach

Import 1893 atlas map of Indian Grove into Sketchup.

From the 1876 map, we know where the Paducah entered and left Section 11, draw those 2 points on the 1893 map and make a line that intersects the TP&W.

The old RR hit section 11 at the northwest corner about .3135 of the section distance east to west and hit it .2555 from the bottom of the RH corner going up.

I can just plot those 2 points on the modern google map on section 11, then draw the angled line.



Problem: need high resolution google map of Fairbury to draw the line on

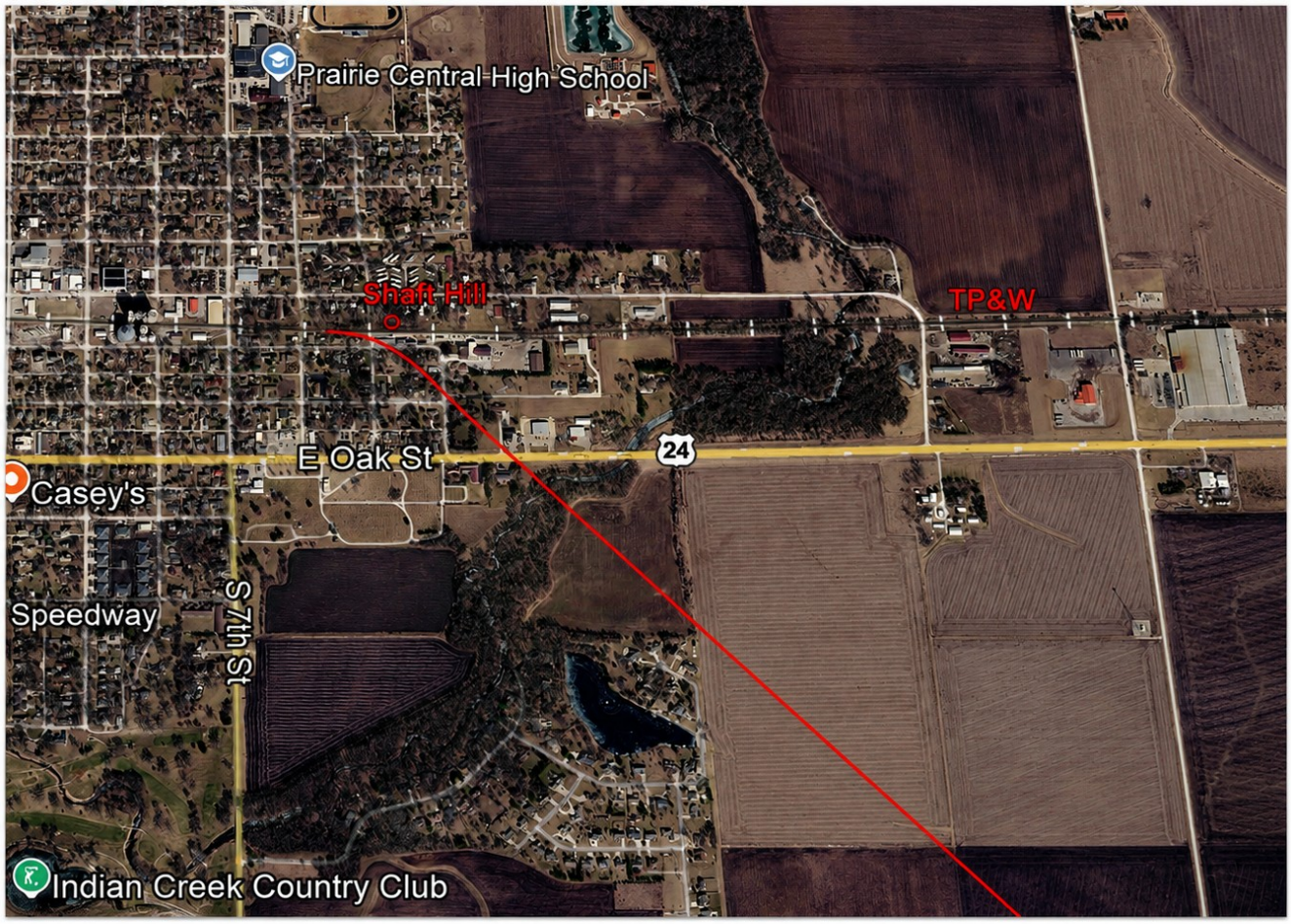
Regular google map screen shot does not have enough resolution to make a good illustration map showing the lost railroad.

Chatgpt said to download Google Earth to my desktop, then output a high resolution image of Fairbury, which I did.

I first opened the high res Google map image of fairbury in Sketchup vers 2014 and measured section 11, and then using the ratios or percentages above, I drew the 2 points on section 11 and then drew a line through those 2 points. But my google map resolution deteriorated somehow in Sketchup 2014?? Don't know why. Chatgpt said to draw the points and the line using Paint.net and the high resolution google earth image of Fairbury.

I then opened up Paint.net and imported the high resolution map from Google Earth. There is no measurement function in Paint.net like sketchup (that I know of). So I used my Sketchup map and eyeballed where the 2 points were in Paint.net. I think I got pretty close.

I was shocked to discover the straight line through the 2 points in section 11 intersected the TP&W about where Shaft Hill from the old coal mine is located !!!! This kind of corrobated the Blade article saying they took out the tracks near the East Shaft coal mine.



This map shows the most likely location of the Chicago & Paducah Railroad that ran from Fairbury to Strawn. The line entered the northwest corner of Fairbury from Pontiac, ran parallel to the TP&W Railroad, then turned south towards Strawn about where the coal mine at Shaft Hill was located. The Strawn extension was removed in 1881. After 145 years, no physical traces of the Strawn extension are known to exist.

Hindsight on morning of August 14 after spending about 4 hours yesterday on this project

I could have maybe done this in 1 hour versus 4 hours if I had been smarter in my process, like this:

- Import 1876 Rumsey map into Sketchup. Determine the ratio of the 2 points on section 11 where the Strawn spur ran through.
- Get a high resolution Google map of Fairbury using Google Earth
- Import the high res Google map of Fairbury into Paint.Net
  - using the 2 ratios noted above, draw the entry and exit points of the Strawn extension on Section 11, then draw straight line through those points and intersect the TP&W (the Chicago & Paducah was almost literally right next to and parallel to the TP&W).
  - Add a curve where the 2 lines intersect

- Add a circle where Shaft Hill mine is located

Using this information, I wrote my short story about finding the Lost Railroad. Note that I have not grammar checked and fine tuned this article yet. I will use Grammarly.com to fix the grammar.

Title: **Fairbury's Lost Railroad Found**

By: Dale C. Maley

Fairbury was established in 1857 when the Peoria & Oquawka Railroad (later the TP&W) laid it tracks from Peoria to the Indiana border. In 1872, the Chicago & Paducah Railroad laid its new tracks from through Pontiac to Fairbury. Within about two more years, the Chicago & Paducah extended its line from Fairbury southeast to Strawn. Just a few years later, the Strawn extension was removed and a railroad from Forrest to Strawn was used instead. It has always been a mystery exactly where the Chicago & Paducah turned south from Fairbury and headed to Strawn.

The only map known to exist which shows the Chicago & Paducah Railroad from Fairbury to Strawn is shown on is the 1876 map of Livingston County created by David Rumsey. This map shows the Chicago & Paducah Railroad leaving Fairbury and heading to Murphy Station and on to Strawn. It is not clear from this map where the exact point was where the Strawn extension left Fairbury and turned south.

A short story about the Chicago & Paducah Railroad was published in the December 31, 1881, issue of the Blade newspaper. "Workmen began tearing up the old Paducah track, between the junction and the east shaft, last Saturday. It is all to be removed, and when done, will add another available street to the city."

Based upon this 1881 Blade story, the Chicago & Paducah Railroad line ran east until at least it reached the East Shaft coal mine. This coal mine was opened in 1867 and closed by 1909. This mine left a pile of slag on the north side of the TP&W railroad tracks between Ninth and Tenth Streets. This slag pile has commonly been called "Shaft Hill" by older residents of Fairbury.

This old 1881 Blade story tells us the Chicago & Paducah Railroad existed by Shaft Hill. The article does not tell us the exact point the tracks turned south to Strawn. When the Chicago & Padudah railroad tracks were in existence, what is now named Walnut Street was called Paducah Avenue.

Livingston County is divided up into townships. Each township measures six miles by six miles. A township has 36 sections, with each section being one mile square. Fairbury is in Indian Grove Township.

The 1876 Rumsey map shows early Fairbury and shows the Chicago & Paducah Railroad with the section lines for Indian Grove Township. The four sections that involve the Chicago & Paducah Railroad are sections two, three, ten, and eleven.

Unfortunately, Google maps shows Fairbury but does not include the section lines. Because of this, it is not easy to simply overlay the 1876 map upon a modern Google Map and see where the Chicago & Paducah Railroad turned south.

One can figure out where section 11 is on a modern Google map because the north boundary is Route 24 and the west boundary is Seventh Street. The farm fields are divided and show the south and east boundaries of section 11.

From the 1876 Rumsey map, we know where the Strawn extension of the Chicago & Paducah Railroad entered and left section 11. One can plot these two points on a modern Google map and draw a straight line through them. Since we know the Chicago & Paducah was very close and parallel to the TP&W Railroad, we can extend this straight line until it intersects the TP&W.

A train can not turn at a sharp angle, so they had a curve connecting the east-west section to the Strawn extension heading southeast of Fairbury

Using the modern Google map, it was determined the Strawn extension of the Chicago & Paducah Railroad likely turned southeast as soon as it passed the coal mine where Shaft Hill is now located. Remarkably, when the line established from the two Section 11 points was extended northwest toward Fairbury, it returned to the railroad corridor near Shaft Hill. The location of Shaft Hill was not used to establish the angle of the reconstructed line.

If this reconstructed route is correct, the railroad would have crossed Indian Creek just southeast of today's Route 24 bridge.

From a historical timeline perspective, the TP&W tracks were laid in 1857. The East Shaft coal mine (at Shaft Hill) started in 1867, or ten years after Fairbury was created. The East Shaft coal mine likely sold coal that was shipped out on the TP&W. This coal mine could have also sold coal for the TP&W to use as fuel on their locomotives.

In 1872, the new Chicago & Paducah Railroad reached Fairbury. The East Shaft coal mine had been operating for about five years. It is likely the railroad owners decided to extend the tract east far enough for the Chicago & Paducah Railroad to also service the East Shaft coal mine. Once the line reached the East Shaft coal mine, it made the turn and headed southeast to Strawn.

If the Strawn extension of the Chicago & Paducah Railroad was removed in 1881 as the Blade reported, this roadway has now been gone for about 145 years. No physical traces of the Strawn extension are known to exist today.

The Chicago & Paducah Railroad was later renamed to the Wabash Railroad. In the 1970s, they still ran a train between Pontiac, McDowell, and Fairbury. The tracks were in such poor condition, the train had to travel very slowly. Around 1979, these tracks were removed. Although these tracks have been gone for almost 50 years, the culverts are still in place where this line crossed roads so it is still well known where this railroad was located.